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# The Problem of Choosing the Language of Communication: Ukrainian Realities

## Abstract

The article analyses the situational change in the language behaviour (code switching) of representatives from different regions of Ukraine based on the data of a statistically significant mass survey of the adult population of different regions in 2017. The dependence of language behaviour on the language situation in a region is confirmed and certain patterns inherent in each of the regions are revealed. The use of the Ukrainian language has a similar dependence on the language situation in all regions, but at different levels: it is used more often when communicating with Ukrainian-speakers, officials, in education, etc. It is rarely used in the information sphere. The connection between the degree of Russification of a certain territory and the laws of language choice in a particular situation is revealed. The article proposes using the results of mass surveys to study language behaviour through the prism of territorial features, which will help to pursue a balanced state language policy, adjusting tactics in accordance with regional language features.

**Keywords:** code switching; Ukrainian–Russian bilingualism; mass survey; territorial features; language compensation; language adaptation

## 1 Introduction

The language situation in Ukraine has attracted the attention of many researchers, both in Ukraine and abroad (Besters-Dilger, 2009; Del Gaudio, 2019, 2020; Hentschel & Taranenko, 2015; Müller & Wingender, 2020; Olszański, 2012 and others). At the same time, it is not a stable situation and the dynamics of its development is mostly associated with political events and changes in official language policy, which have been particularly noticeable since 2014 (Zalizniak, 2020). The possibility of rapid change in the language situation is also due to the fact that the declared level of knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian in Ukraine is high, as evidenced by the results of the annual national monitoring surveys of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, in particular, in 2019<sup>1</sup> (Table 1).

Language competence does not necessarily involve its active use in all areas of communication, so there is often a change in individual language behaviour, depending on the requirements of society and the specific situation of communication. The social survey results largely depend on the wording of the question, which will be illustrated below. The aim of this article is to analyse the situational change of the language behaviour of representatives from different regional areas<sup>2</sup> of Ukraine based on their self-assessment.

<sup>1</sup> Surveys were carried out 1994–2019, the sample of each survey was on average 1,800 people and was representative of the adult population of Ukraine. The results were published in Parashchevin (2019, pp. 414, 466).

<sup>2</sup> The term *regional area* in the article refers to a part of the territory of Ukraine (comprising several administrative regions, the Ukrainian ‘oblast’), distinguished by the general features of the language

**Table 1.** Answers to the question “*How fluently do you speak Ukrainian/Russian?*”

Answer	Language	
	Ukrainian	Russian
I can speak, read and write this language fluently	81.6	73.8
I can read and write fluently, but I have problems in communication	10.9	14.7
I can read this language fluently, but do not write or speak	3.3	6.4
I understand this language, but I have some problems in speaking and reading	3.5	2.9
I almost do not understand this language	0.7	2.2

## 2 The Study of Language Behaviour in Academic Literature

The question of choosing a language of communication, as well as code-switching, in the case of collective and individual bilingualism has been widely discussed in academic literature. In her monograph specifically devoted to the problem of code-switching, based on the analysis of a number of publications including P. Bourdieu (1997), W. Labov (1972), P. Trudgill (1974), S. Gal (1979), and L. Milroy & M. Gordon (Milroy & Gordon, 2003), P. Gardner-Chloros divides the factors affecting the choice of a particular language code into three main groups. These factors are: “(1) factors independent of particular speakers and particular circumstances, in which the varieties are used, which affect all the speakers of the relevant varieties in a particular community, e.g. economic “market”, prestige and covert prestige, power relations, and the associations of each variety with a particular context or way of life; (2) factors attached to the speakers, both as individuals and as members of a variety of sub-groups: their competence in each variety, their social networks and relationships, their attitudes and ideologies, their self-perception and perception of others; (3) factors within the conversations where CS (code-switching – S.S.) takes place: CS is a major conversational resource for speakers, providing further tools to structure their discourse beyond those available to monolinguals” (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, pp. 42–43).

The situational choice of the language of communication in bilingual society is linked to the so-called linguistic shift or change of the language, which is usually understood as the “process and result of a loss of language ethnicity by the ethnos” (Mikhal’chenko, 2016, p. 849). However, the reverse process is possible – the restoration of the lost functions of a language and its transformation from an exceptionally ethnic to a fully-fledged state language.

The factors determining language shift are closely linked to those determining code-switching in multilingual society, according to E. Khilkhanova. She distinguishes such groups by the interaction of majority and minority languages – external, internal and linguistic (Khilkhanova, 2012, p. 85). External factors include sociolinguistic (demographics, education, place of residence, gender, etc.), socio-cultural, social-psychological and historical-political factors. Internal factors include psycholinguistic, subjective, ethno-cultural and pragmatic factors. Linguistic factors include semantic and discursive factors, the level of language competence in both languages, the transmission of another person’s speech, linguistic lacunarity, and culturally specific concepts. Recognizing the challenge of imposing a real language situation or the linguistic behaviour of individuals onto any model, the researcher acknowledges the possibility of categorising the same factor to different groups.

In the sociolinguistic classification of languages proposed by Orest Tkachenko according to the degree of prevalence, they are divided into: 1) languages of individual use; 2) languages of partial (age) distribution; 3) languages of partial ethnic distribution; 4) languages of full ethnic

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situation (see reference 4). Accordingly, the adjective *areal* is used to describe the features inherent in the *regional area* in this sense.

distribution; 5) languages of partial territorial distribution; 6) languages of full territorial distribution; 7) languages of extraterritorial distribution; 8) world languages (Tkachenko, 2014, pp. 84–145). According to this classification, Ukrainian cannot be considered a language of full territorial distribution throughout Ukraine (although it is so in most of the western Ukrainian regions). Meanwhile, in the southern and eastern regional areas it is not even a language of full ethnic distribution, due to the loss of linguistic identity by many representatives of the Ukrainian ethnic group. In the northern and central regional areas, the sociolinguistic status of Ukrainian is only now approaching that of a language of full ethnic distribution. In addition, Surzhyk (mixed ukrainian–russian speech) is most common in these regional areas (Del Gaudio, 2019, 2020; Hentschel & Taranenko, 2015). This article does not focus on this particular issue.

The status of the Ukrainian language is a consequence of linguistic Russification, “the Russian language and culture spread in a predominantly non-Russian environment at the expense of the local language or languages and cultures” (Gasimov, 2012, p. 10). This process and its results<sup>3</sup> have affected most non-Russian languages in the territory of the former Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. For Ukrainians, Russification began earlier than for many other nations and it affected all three languages used by Ukrainians from at least the mid-seventeenth century (consecutively or simultaneously): Ukrainian Church Slavonic, Ruthenian, and New Literary Ukrainian: “Despite different resources and managerial skills of Russian bureaucracy which varied across time periods in the history of the denationalization of Ukrainian, linguistic Russification has always been consistent, conscious, and long-lasting, irrespective of which language was subjected to restrictive policies” (Danylenko & Naienko, 2019, p. 37). In the Soviet period, russification was implemented particularly “through the repression of linguists, which was in part the result of Stalin’s arbitrary and eminently exclusive «cultural policy»”, claims Z. Gasimov (2012, p. 17). Ukrainian scholars suffered greatly from repressions and were accused of bourgeois nationalism. An overview of Soviet language policy can be found in the introductory article by L. Masenko to the collection of documents and materials *Ukraïns’ka mova u XX storichchi: Istoriia linhvotsydu* (“Ukrainian language in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the history of linguocide”) (Masenko, 2005). At the same time, Z. Gasimov states: “Many parallels of such a language policy can be found in the Finnish–Ugric regions of Soviet Russia, as well as in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, where many Turkologists were persecuted, i.e. those, who were directly involved in the development of school textbooks and the creation of new words” (Gasimov, 2012, p. 18).

Nowadays a reverse process is occurring, strengthening the position of the Ukrainian language, first of all as the state language. The aim of this strengthening is to achieve the status of a language used throughout the whole territory of the Ukrainian state. This does not mean that Ukrainian squeezes out all other languages in a certain territory, rather it is also a language of interethnic communication within the country, while fully serving its own ethnos (Tkachenko, 2014, p. 133). In this regard, Ukrainian linguist O. Tkachenko (1990) proposed the concept of “language stability” (Ukrainian “мовна стійкість” / “movna stijkist’”) to mark individual and collective features of native speakers who maintain loyalty to their language regardless of language environment. This concept is very important for the empowerment of a language that has been established as official, competing with the language which previously performed these functions. “Language stability” is gaining acceptance as a term (Masenko, 2004) because it is very important for the characterization of the language situation. It is not yet found in sociolinguistic dictionaries and encyclopaedias (Mesthrie, 2001; Mikhal’chenko, 2016) but is often found in the works of Ukrainian linguists (Renchka, 2020). This national orientation of the term is to some extent natural, since language stability, in the understanding of O. Tkachenko, can exist only when there is no language barrier, either due to the structural proximity of languages or total bilingualism (at least passive), otherwise communication becomes impossible. Both phenomena are present in Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup> Cf: “By ‘Russification’ is meant the level of historical and synchronic diffusion of Russian in a specific area” (Del Gaudio, 2019, p. 169).

Western scholars use the notion of “power of language”, meaning primarily its value for speakers: “The social and symbolic power of languages or language use does not derive from language as such, but from the settings – the particular contexts or markets – in which communication takes place” (Gogolin, 2001, p. 613), and sometimes even considering language as a product for exchange, “which, within an economy of linguistic exchanges, is given a price and a certain value” (Vigouroux, 2001, p. 610).

Under conditions of mass bilingualism, the study of the true language behaviour of speakers acquires great importance, since, as P. Gardner-Chloros rightly remarks, “Whether used in a deliberate way, as above, or not, CS provides a variety of clues as to the social identity of the speaker – the groups which, to paraphrase Le Page, she or he wishes to resemble” (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p. 42). In Ukrainian linguistics, the problem of code-switching has not been studied sufficiently. Ukrainian researchers discuss it in theory (Braha, 2012) and study it based on public speaking (Chaus, 2013) or in the process of learning (Bilokonenko, 2018), but it has not yet been studied on the basis of a large data set, although there are separate publications on this issue (Bikova, 2006). The peculiarities of language choice in different communicative situations by Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilinguals living in Poland and Ukraine were carefully studied by P. Levchuk (2019, 2020), who compared statistical data collected through questionnaires with respondents’ statements from their linguistic biographies.

Of course, the best way to analyse speech behaviour is to observe it directly and observe specific cases of change in the language code in the communication process. This method gives good results for the study of language interaction in minority communities. However, with this method it is impossible to study the process of the nationalization of the language in a large country with a linguistically heterogeneous population and areal specificity. Another methodological approach is a direct survey of respondents about the choice of the language of communication in a particular communicative situation. This technique has been successfully tested to study language behaviour in Kyiv (Sokolova, 2013). However, the survey was not statistically significant.

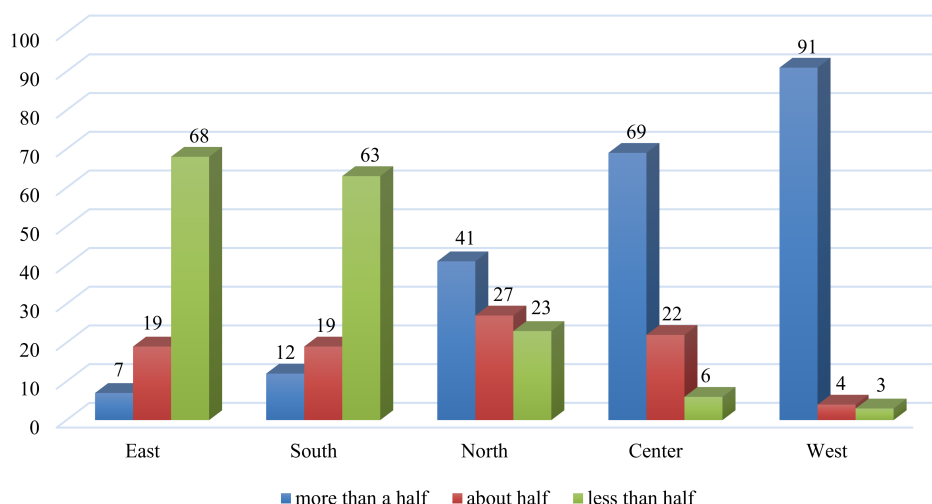
In order to study linguistic behaviour, this article used the results of a statistically significant mass survey.<sup>4</sup> Respondents’ answers to the question “*What language do you usually speak?*”, which offered 27 communicative situations and three possible answers (*mostly Ukrainian, Ukrainian and Russian, mostly Russian*), and some other questions of the questionnaire, consisting of more than 160 questions, were used as material for analysis. Answers have been analysed both for the array as a whole and in relation to the regional area of residence.<sup>5</sup>

### 3 The Linguistic Behaviour of Ukrainians in the Territorial Dimension

A previous study of this material showed that most respondents choose the language of communication depending on the circumstances, often at the expense of their own language preferences (Sokolova, 2020, p. 359). Such behaviour is inherent to those who use both languages in everyday

<sup>4</sup> The survey was conducted within the framework of Volkswagen Fund Project № 62700395 “Bi- and multilingualism between conflict intensification and conflict resolution. Ethno-linguistic conflicts, language politics and contact situations in post-Soviet Ukraine and Russia”. The investigation was conducted February 2–10, 2017. The total number of respondents is 2007, aged 18 and above. Method of investigation: individual interviews according to place of residence. The material represents the whole Ukraine, except temporarily occupied territories (Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions). The survey was coordinated by H.M. Zalizniak (Sokolova & Zalizniak, 2018), who also selected all the necessary correlations from the general database. Its author formed all tables and diagrams in the text of the article.

<sup>5</sup> The most useful, in Ukrainian sociological and sociolinguistic works, distribution of regional areas is used: West (Volyn, Rivne, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia regions); Centre (Vinnytsia, Khmelnytsky, Kirovohrad, Cherkasy, Poltava), North (Kyiv, Chernihiv, Zhytomyr, Sumy regions and Kyiv), East (Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv), South (Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, Odessa, Kherson regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) (Besters-Dilger, 2009, pp. 369–370).



**Figure 1.** Distribution of answers to the question “How many people in your community speak Ukrainian with their family and friends?” (2017, %).

life, as well as those who consciously choose to speak mainly in either Ukrainian or Russian (Sokolova, 2020, p. 365). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the peculiarities of language adaptation which are dependent on the respondents’ territory of residence.

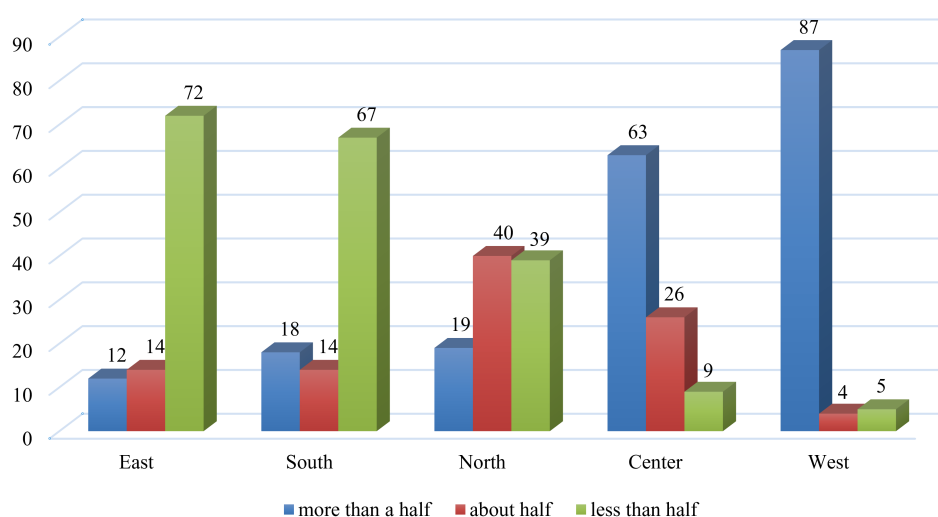
### 3.1 The Linguistic Behaviour of Ukrainians in the Private Sphere

The language preferences of residents from different regional areas are quite different, as evidenced by their answers to questions related to communication in the private sphere (Figure 1). Furthermore, these data are dynamic, as indicated by a comparison with the results of a survey conducted using the same method in 2006<sup>6</sup> (Figure 2).

The answers to the questions about the language environment of the informants are evaluative, however, and are therefore subjective. Information about the respondents’ own language of communication is more informative. The results of many years research by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Parashchevin, 2019, p. 467) illustrate (Figure 3) the general dynamics in favour of the Ukrainian language in Ukraine as a whole (an increase from 37% to 45%). However, this is primarily due to a decrease in bilingualism (which saw a reduction from 32% to 24%), while the frequency of communication within the family mainly in Russian remained almost the same (approximately 30%) and in some years increased, being almost equal to communication mainly in Ukrainian (2006, 2008, 2013).

A 2017 survey revealed uneven use of Ukrainian for private communication, not only by regional area, but also by individual options (Figure 4), which was the result of answers to a number of questions: “**What language:** do (did) your grandparents speak / your parents speak; do you communicate with your family at home / with friends; did you get your secondary education in; would you like your children to talk / to learn?”. This use of Ukrainian is most stable in the western regional area (more than 90%), indicating that Ukrainian is the language of full territorial distribution there. We can observe an intergenerational decrease in Ukrainian language communication in eastern and southern regional areas (in the east 20% with grandparents, 15%

<sup>6</sup> The research is described in Besters-Dilger (2009, pp. 369–370). The general linguistic characteristics of the areas are similar in various studies but in order to monitor the dynamics, the most revealing studies are those carried out using the same methodology. Information from the 2006 survey database was kindly provided by G.M. Zaliznyak, who coordinated the poll part in both studies.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of answers to the question “How many people in your community speak Ukrainian with their family, friends?” (2006, %).

with parents, and 11% in their own family; in the south: 22%, 20%, and 16% respectively). Representatives of these regions less frequently use Ukrainian within family and with friends (9% in the east and 7% in the south). This is evidence of the Russification process, which is more significantly spread in the southern regional area. Its representatives are more likely to have Ukrainian-speaking relatives of older generations than representatives of the eastern regional area, but are less likely to display language stability outside the family. At the same time, more than a quarter of them, having received secondary education in Ukrainian, want the same for their children and want their children to speak Ukrainian or at least two languages.

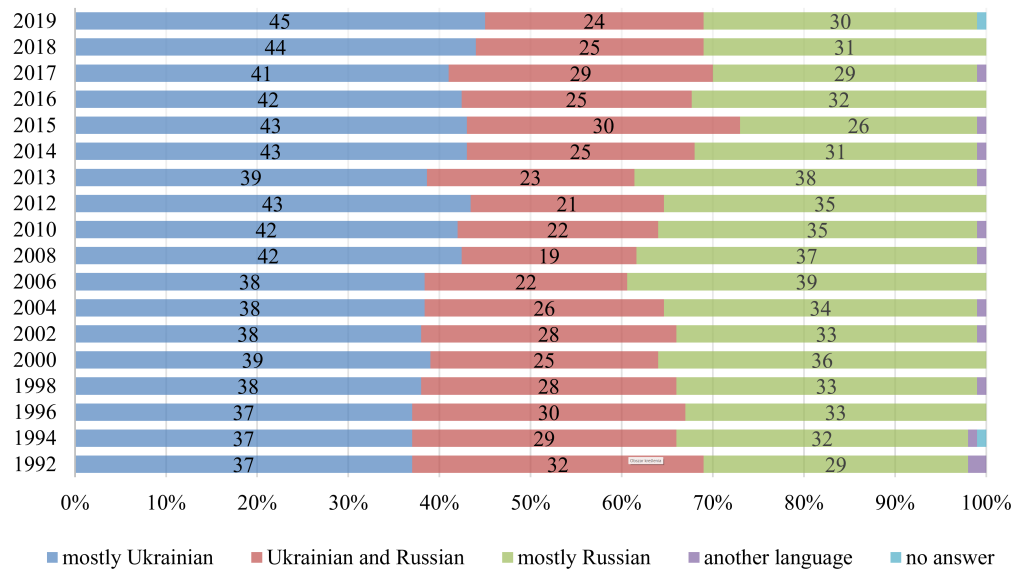
About 60% of the inhabitants of the northern and central regional areas come from Ukrainian-speaking families, but only a little more than half communicate in Ukrainian in their own families and even less do so outside their families. The frequency of Ukrainian language education among them is higher than 60%, but wishes for children are approximately at the level of Ukrainian-speaking communication between their parents (57–60%).

Turning back to the question of how well the residents of Ukraine speak Ukrainian, let us compare the results of the survey of the Institute of Sociology, and those that were received on the question, formulated differently (Table 2), where the sum of responses “mostly Ukrainian” and “Ukrainian and Russian to the same extent” (about 70% in Ukraine in general) is more than 10% lower than the number of those who assessed their Ukrainian proficiency as fluent in the survey of the Institute of Sociology (81.6%).

**Table 2.** Distribution of answers to the question “What language do you speak best?” (2017, %)

Answer	East	South	North	Centre	West	Ukraine in general
Mostly Ukrainian	9.8	9.5	48.8	53.5	90.3	43.5
Ukrainian and Russian	35.5	30.9	30.4	29.8	7.0	26.1
Mostly Russian	54.7	59.7	20.8	16.8	2.7	29.5

Even when wording the question in such a way, the number of those who know Ukrainian is at least no smaller than Russian, with at least 40–45% in the east and south and about 80% in



**Figure 3.** Distribution of answers to the question “What language(s) do you mostly communicate within your family (at home)?” (1992–2019, %).

the north and centre. At the same time, Ukrainian is used for communication within the family by a small proportion of those who know both languages well. For communication with friends, Ukrainian is used almost exclusively by those who know it better than Russian. According to the data, about a third of the inhabitants of the east and south identify Ukrainian as their only native language<sup>7</sup> (Table 3), and about a third claim to have two native languages – Ukrainian and Russian. It should be mentioned that in the northern regional area, the number of those who consider Ukrainian to be their native language (78.7%) is approximately equal to the number of those who know it better (48.8%) or at the same level as Russian (30.4%). Among those who know Russian better, there are those who believe their native language is Russian (9.5%) and those who name two native languages (11%). In the central regions, the situation is somewhat different: some of those who know both languages equally well (29.8%) consider Ukrainian to be their mother tongue, and some claim both (a total of 8.7%), while almost all those who know Russian better (16.8%) also considered it to be their native language (15.7%). It can be assumed that the Russification process of ethnic Ukrainians went further in the centre of Ukraine than in the north, partially affecting their linguistic self-identification, while in the north Russian is considered native by mostly ethnic Russians.<sup>8</sup>

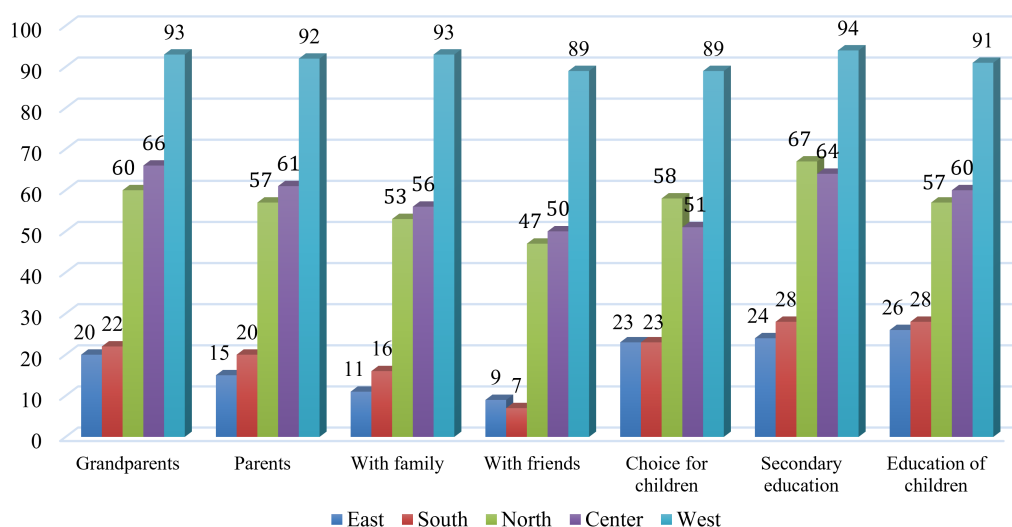
### 3.2 Linguistic Behaviour Outside the Private Sphere

Outside the private sphere the language of communication depends on circumstances (Table 4). Thus, in all regions the Ukrainian language is most often used in conversation with Ukrainian-speakers: by more than a third of respondents in the east and south (language use in this option

<sup>7</sup> Informants have different understandings of the concept of the mother tongue, which is probably the reason for the variation of this indicator in different surveys. It is important to correlate the answer to this question with other answers of the same respondents for the purpose of this study, so that we do not compare with the data of other studies.

<sup>8</sup> According to estimates made by the author of the article according to the official data of the 2001 census, the number of ethnic Russians in the territories included in the article in the northern regional area was 8.4%, and in the central region only 5.4%.





**Figure 4.** Communication in Ukrainian in the private sphere (2017, %).

**Table 3.** Distribution of answers to the question “What language do you consider your mother tongue?” (2017 %).

Answer	East	South	North	Centre	West	Ukraine in general
Ukrainian	34.6	29.4	78.7	75.3	95.1	63.4
Ukrainian and Russian	32.7	34.9	11.0	8.7	1.9	17.3
Russian	32.2	31.4	9.5	15.7	0.8	18.0
Another language	0.3	1.6	0	0	2.2	0.8
No answer	0.2	2.7	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.6

correlates with language self-identification), by 70–80% of respondents in the north and centre (a small part of those who consider Ukrainian their mother tongue, even with Ukrainian-speakers, do not always use Ukrainian, but some of those who call Russian their mother tongue try to communicate in Ukrainian in this situation, at least in parallel with Russian), and by almost all respondents in the West (which corresponds to their linguistic self-identification).

The survey was conducted before the adoption of the Law of Ukraine “*Pro zabezpechennia funktsionuvannia ukraïnskoi movy yak derzhavnoi*” (“On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language”) (*Zakon Ukraïny*, 2019). This probably partially explains the fact that, except for the representatives of the western regional area (almost 96%), the level of use of exclusively Ukrainian in public institutions is unreasonably low (60–70% in the north and in the centre, where some informants use two languages 23–30%, and in the south and east more than half speak only Russian). In the production and service sectors, Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians are less likely to use their native language than at home: east (10% and 8% compared to 11%, respectively<sup>9</sup>), south (7.5% and 10.5% compared to 16%), north (47% and 51% compared to 53%), centre (49% and 55% compared to 56%). Only people from the western regions, who sometimes deviate from their own language preferences at work, return to their natural language code in stores. Representatives of all regions adapt to the language of their interlocutor. The frequency of communication in Russian with Russian-speakers is the highest in all regional areas, almost 68% of representatives of the west and about a third of those in the north and centre speak Russian with

<sup>9</sup> Compare with Figure 4.



Russian-speakers. In the east and south, 75–82% speak Russian with Russian-speakers (some of them contrary to their own language preferences: it is more natural for ~10% to speak Ukrainian in these regional areas), and only 3–7% show language firmness.

**Table 4.** Choice of language of communication outside the private sphere (2017, %).

What language do you usually speak:	Answer	East	South	North	Centre	West
with Ukrainian speakers?	mostly Ukrainian	32.8	35.4	69.6	80.0	96.2
	Ukrainian and Russian	31.6	30.0	22.0	12.6	2.0
	mostly Russian	35.6	34.7	8.4	7.4	1.9
with Russian speakers?	mostly Ukrainian	3.3	6.8	32.6	31.1	67.6
	Ukrainian and Russian	21.9	10.9	28.6	26.7	23.3
	Mostly Russian	74.8	82.3	38.8	42.2	9.1
at work (school)?	mostly Ukrainian	10.1	7.5	47.5	48.9	91.8
	Ukrainian and Russian	29.4	31.5	37.0	36.9	6.1
	Mostly Russian	60.5	61.0	15.5	14.2	2.0
to sellers in stores?	mostly Ukrainian	8.0	10.5	50.6	55.1	93.3
	Ukrainian and Russian	26.6	19.5	27.8	27.9	4.7
	mostly Russian	65.4	70.0	21.6	17.0	2.0
to officials in government agencies?	mostly Ukrainian	15.5	26.6	59.3	68.1	95.8
	Ukrainian and Russian	26.1	19.4	29.5	22.7	2.1
	Mostly Russian	58.5	54.0	11.3	9.1	2.1

### 3.3 Choice of Language in the Information Sphere

In terms of the distribution of the use of languages in the information sphere, bilingualism prevails almost everywhere (Table 5).

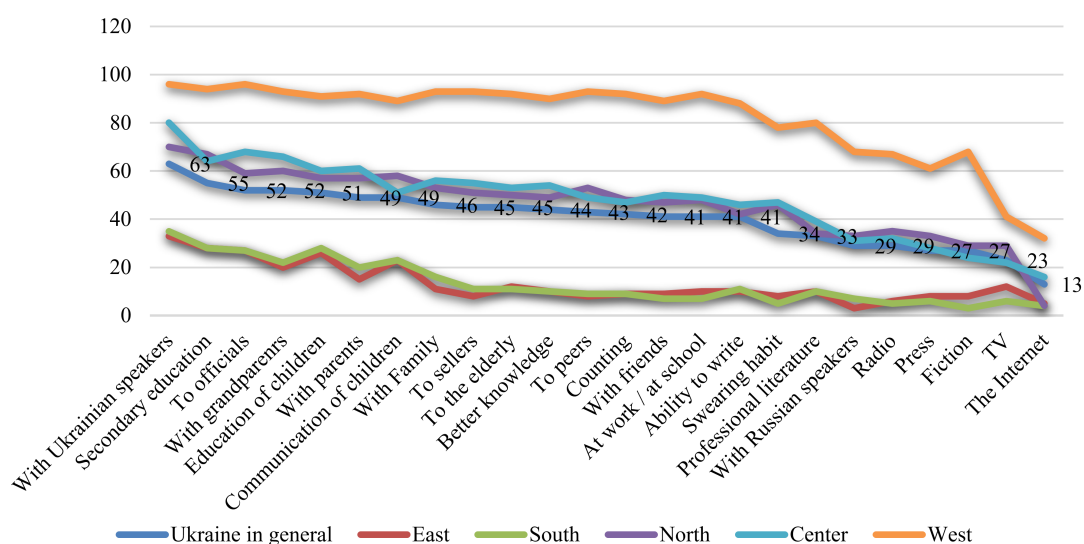
Representatives of different regions only try to choose professional literature and, to a lesser extent, fiction in the language most convenient for them (Ukrainian in the west, Russian in the east and south, and in the north and in the centre they often read in both languages). Compared to the Russian-speaking segment of the Internet, the Ukrainian-speaking segment is less noticeable, so even Ukrainian-speaking residents of the western regional area, as well as representatives of the centre and north, often search for information in both languages (over 60%), while 56–70% of residents of the east and south do so.

### 3.4 General Regularities of Language Code Selection in Bilingual Environments

The question of finding patterns in the choice of language code arises when confronted with such an uneven distribution of languages by areas of operation in all regional areas. Analysis of the frequency of Ukrainian language choice, carried out both for the whole data set and for each regional area separately (Figure 5), shows that the communication situation is the leading factor, as the curves for the array as a whole and for each regional area are similar in configuration: Ukrainian is most often used in communication with Ukrainian-speakers, in secondary education, in communication with officials, and it is the language of previous generations and is desirable for children. In the western regional area, its use is stable in all areas, declining only in the mass

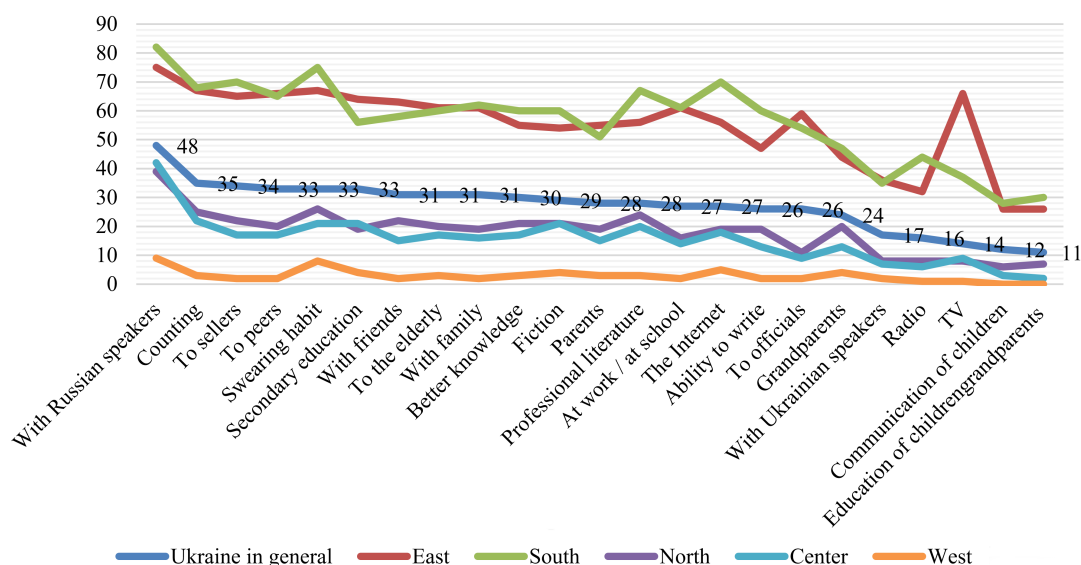
**Table 5.** The use of languages for obtaining information (2017, %)

Source of information	Language	East	South	North	Centre	West
Professional literature	mostly Ukrainian	9.5	10.0	34.1	38.5	80.0
	Ukrainian and Russian	35.0	23.2	41.7	41.5	16.8
	mostly Russian	55.6	66.8	24.2	20.0	3.3
Fiction	mostly Ukrainian	7.5	2.5	29.0	24.3	67.9
	Ukrainian and Russian	38.3	37.8	50.2	54.8	28.0
	mostly Russian	54.2	59.7	20.7	20.9	4.1
Radio	mostly Ukrainian	6.3	4.9	35.2	31.5	66.5
	Ukrainian and Russian	61.8	50.8	56.6	63.4	32.9
	mostly Russian	31.8	44.3	8.1	5.0	0.6
TV	mostly Ukrainian	12.0	5.8	28.7	22.6	40.9
	Ukrainian and Russian	65.8	57.6	63.1	68.2	58.5
	mostly Russian	22.2	36.6	8.2	9.2	0.6
Press	mostly Ukrainian	8.0	5.7	33.3	27.6	61.0
	Ukrainian and Russian	43.9	25.4	56.2	60.7	37.3
	mostly Russian	48.2	68.9	10.4	11.7	1.7
The Internet	mostly Ukrainian	5.2	3.7	19.2	16.0	32.4
	Ukrainian and Russian	39.1	26.1	61.4	66.2	62.3
	mostly Russian	55.7	70.1	19.4	17.9	5.3

**Figure 5.** Distribution of answers “mostly in Ukrainian” (in descending order of frequency in the array as a whole) (2017, %).

media. A reduction in Ukrainian language use begins outside the private sphere in other regional areas, and becomes more significant in the mass media.

The predominant use of Russian (Figure 6) displays an areal specificity, as the curves of the graphs by regional areas have different configurations: for the western, central and northern regional areas they are quite similar, although located at different levels. In the south, however, there is a sharp increase in the answers to the question “*What language do you use to: abuse someone / to read professional literature / to search for materials on the Internet?*” (approximately 70%). In the east, the increase in indicators after a stable decrease is accounted for by communication at work / study (61%) and television (66%). The level of Russian use in government agencies is also high (59%).



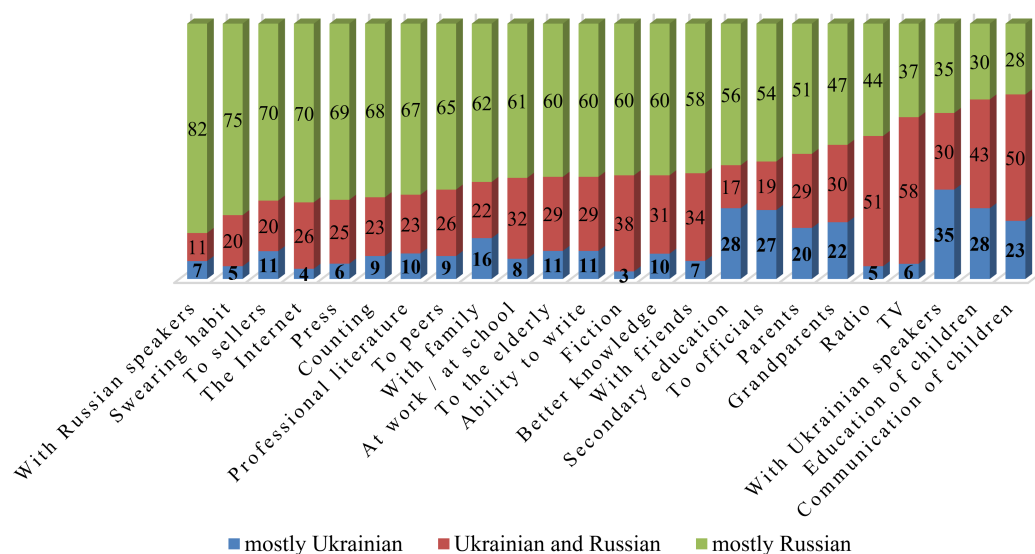
**Figure 6.** Distribution of answers “mostly in Russian” (in descending order of frequency in the array as a whole) (2017, %).

Each regional area has its own peculiarities in changing the language code in general, depending on the communication situation. This can also be represented graphically, based on the frequency of use of the most common language in the regional area (Figures 7, 8, 9, 10, 11).

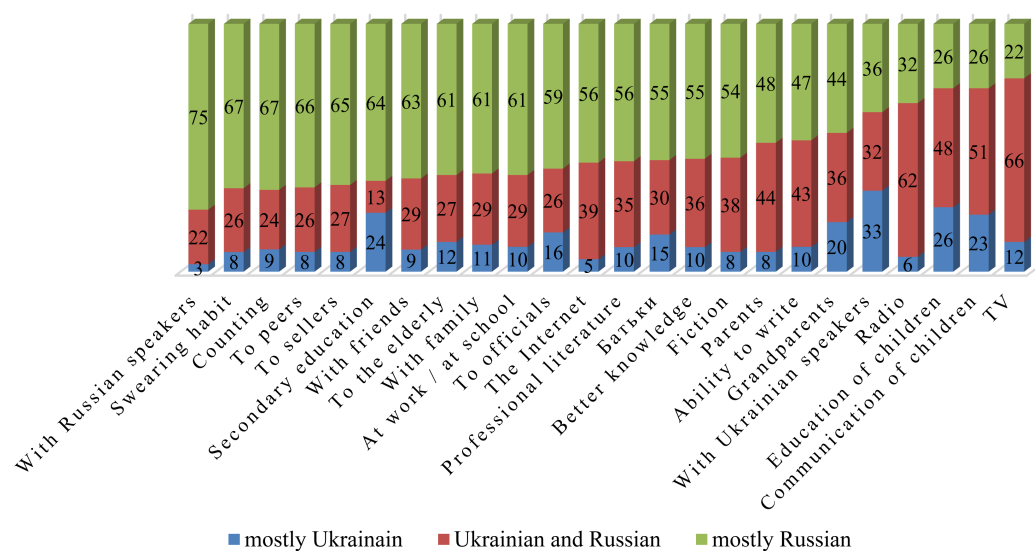
### 3.5 Linguistic Adaptation as a Type of Collective Language Behaviour in a Predominantly Russian-Speaking Environment

In the south and east (Figures 7, 8), communication is predominantly in Russian, mainly in interactions with Russian-speakers, in the sphere of trading, within the family, with friends, and at work. Use of Russian is recorded in habits and skills (swearing, counting, writing). An increase in the share of communication in Ukrainian is observed in the spheres in which citizens in one way or another enter into relations with the state (education, state institutions, etc.) and with Ukrainian-speaking interlocutors.

Bilingualism prevails in the information sphere. Preferences about the language of communication and the education of children are also connected to bilingualism. Such linguistic behaviour can be called “linguistic adaptation”, and is associated with the movement of society to expand the functions of Ukrainian as the state language.

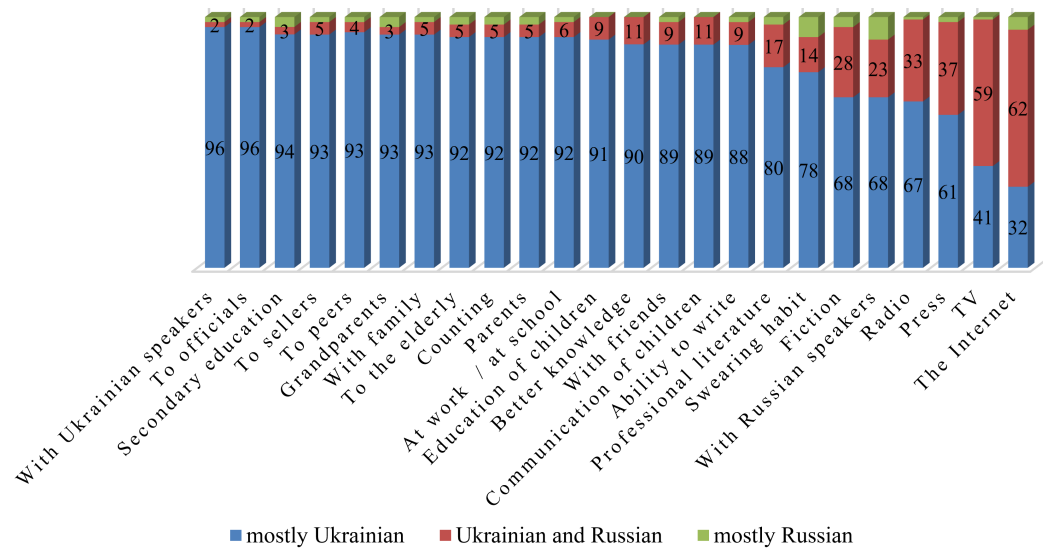


**Figure 7.** Language adaptation (south) – in descending order of the frequency of the use of Russian (2017, %).

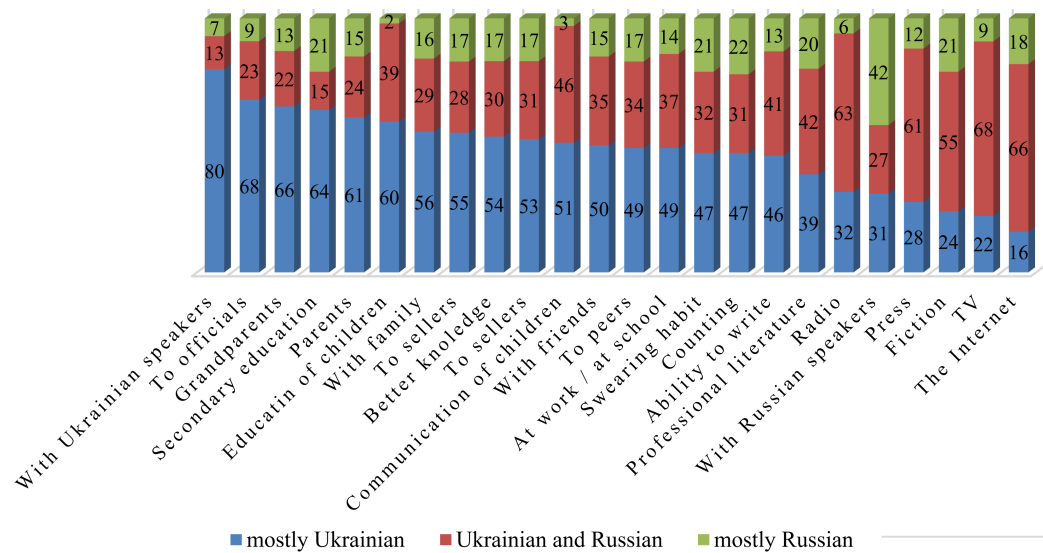


**Figure 8.** Language adaptation (east) – in descending order of frequency of the use of Russian (2017, %).

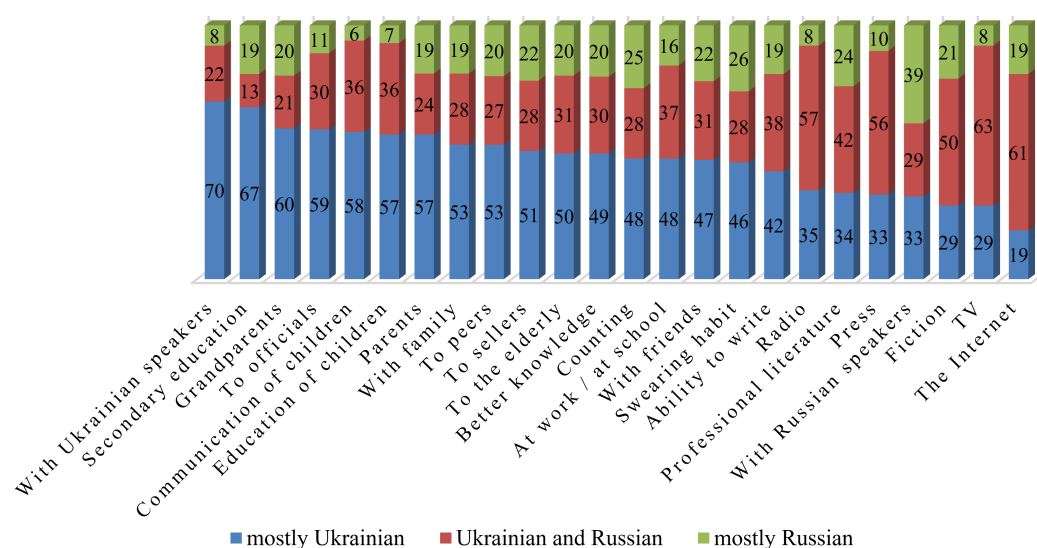
There are some differences between language adaptation in the east and south. Representatives choose the option “Ukrainian and Russian” more often in their wishes for their children (in the east, 43% for education and 50% for speech, in the south, 48% and 51% respectively). The same pattern of bilingualism occurs in communication with officials (east 19%, south 26%), but in the south respondents more often resort to Ukrainian-language communication (east 16%, south 27%). Representatives of the east receive information in both languages more often (radio – 62% east,



**Figure 9.** Language compensation (west) – in descending order of frequency of the use of Ukrainian (2017, %).



**Figure 10.** Language compensation (centre) – in descending order of frequency of the use of Ukrainian (2017, %).



**Figure 11.** Language compensation (north) – in descending order of frequency of the use of Ukrainian (2017, %).

51% south, television – 66% east, 58% south, press – 44% east, 25% south, professional literature – 35% east, 23% south). In both regions, almost the same percentage consume purely Ukrainian-language content (radio – 6% east, 5% south, television – 12% east, 6% south, press – 8% east, 6% south, professional literature – 10% in both east and south).

### 3.6 Varieties of Language Compensation as a Collective Language Behaviour in a Predominantly Ukrainian-Speaking Environment

The language behaviour of the representatives of the other three regional areas has other peculiarities, most clearly expressed in the western regional area, where Ukrainian is the main language of everyday communication (Figure 9). Deviations from the basic language code primarily occur due to the need to obtain information and communicate with foreigners. Such language behaviour can be called language compensation, which is the norm in any society for reading and communicating with native speakers of another language code, but which cannot be considered natural for the information sphere in general within one's own country.

In the northern and central regional areas (Figures 10, 11), language compensation is more common and is a consequence of the previous process of Russification. The percentage of Ukrainian-speakers, even among the elderly (the grandparents of our respondents), in these regional areas (over 60%) is much lower than the number of those who identified themselves as Ukrainian and called Ukrainian their mother tongue (75–79%), and is approximately the same as the number of people who speak Ukrainian with Ukrainian-speakers. Residents of these regional areas adapt to all other situations using Russian (most often with Russian-speakers), or remain bilingual, which is most common in the information sphere. This influences their preferences for the language of their children, who many people would like to be bilingual (centre 46%, north 36%) and to choose two languages to study (centre 39%, north 36%). The need for Russian-language communication varies mainly within 15–20% for informants and sharply reduces in terms of communication with and education of children (only 2–7%). Even those who consider Russian to be their native language and who use it for communication in most cases do not want to see their own children speaking exclusively in Russian.

For 70–80% of respondents in the central and northern regional areas, the Ukrainian-speaking environment is a factor which motivates them to communicate in Ukrainian. A further 13% (centre) and 22% (north) employ bilingualism. Taking into account that 79% (north) and 84% (centre) speak Ukrainian better than or at the same level as they do Russian, the language environment in most situations is an obstacle to their communication in Ukrainian. This is especially true for those who naturally use Ukrainian (49% north and 54% centre), particularly in the information sphere. At the same time, for those who know Russian better (17% centre and 20% north), this opportunity is available, at least in information sphere (Internet, reading professional and fiction). Half of them choose purely Russian-language content on radio, television and in the press, which Ukrainian-speaking residents of both of these regional areas and the east and south cannot do.

## 4 Conclusion

The analysis of the language behaviour of the representatives of different Ukrainian regional areas overall confirmed its dependence on the language situation in the regional area, and at the same time revealed certain regularities inherent in each of the areas. The use of Ukrainian in different areas, although at different levels, has a similar dependence on the communicative situation: it is most often used when talking to Ukrainian-speakers, public officials, and in the field of education, etc. It is less often used in the information sphere. At the same time, in all regional areas (including even the west) where the Ukrainian language is a language of full territorial distribution, natural Ukrainian speakers, remaining in their comfort bubble in private communication, often need to use Russian language sources in the information sphere. They try to compensate for the lack of Ukrainian-language information in this manner. This process is therefore called language compensation.

Past Russification processes in central and northern areas have meant that the number of Ukrainian speakers in everyday life has decreased from generation to generation. The habit of changing their own language code to the code of the interlocutor leads to an increase in the use of Russian in public communication, compared to family communication. This causes hesitation in the choice of their native language by ethnic Ukrainians and even the rejection of their natural linguistic identity. However, a reverse trend has recently been taking place, which aims to restore linguistic identity. This is manifested primarily through people's wishes for their children. Russification processes are more clearly visible in the southern and eastern regional areas, affecting the linguistic identity of ethnic Ukrainians. Even here, despite a dual linguistic identity against the background of better knowledge of Russian and its use as the language of the family, there are indications that a reverse process is beginning – the return of Ukrainians to their mother tongue. The main factor in the transition to Ukrainian in these regions is the language of the interlocutor. However, this transition is not always stable and speakers resort to alternating communication between the two languages. We propose that this process be named “language adaptation”.

The method of analysing language behaviour based on mass survey data proved to be productive. It should be repeated after a certain amount of time. Regional surveys<sup>10</sup> should also be conducted, which would allow a deeper understanding of language use within regional areas and provide insight into the real vectors of language development. This will help achieve a balanced state language policy by adjusting tactics according to areal peculiarities.

<sup>10</sup> The article was written before the start of the large-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, which began on February 24, 2022 and caused large-scale migration, the consequences of which are now difficult to assess.



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